

ASSOCIATED PRESS STATEMENT OF NEWS VALUES AND PRINCIPLES

For more than a century and a half, men and women of The Associated Press have had the privilege of bringing truth to the world. They have gone to great lengths, overcome great obstacles – and, too often, made great and horrific sacrifices – to ensure that the news was reported quickly, accurately and honestly. Our efforts have been rewarded with trust: More people in more places get their news from the AP than from any other source.

In the 21st century, that news is transmitted in more ways than ever before – in print, on the air and on the Web, with words, images, graphics, sounds and video. But always and in all media, we insist on the highest standards of integrity and ethical behavior when we gather and deliver the news.

That means we abhor inaccuracies, carelessness, bias or distortions.

It means we will not knowingly introduce false information into material intended for publication or broadcast; nor will we alter photo or image content. Quotations must be accurate, and precise.

It means we always strive to identify all the sources of our information, shielding them with anonymity only when they insist upon it and when they provide vital information – not opinion or speculation; when there is no other way to obtain that information; and when we know the source is knowledgeable and reliable.

It means we don't plagiarize.

It means we avoid behavior or activities that create a conflict of interest and compromise our ability to report the news fairly and accurately, uninfluenced by any person or action.

It means we don't misidentify or misrepresent ourselves to get a story. When we seek an interview, we identify ourselves as AP journalists.

It means we don't pay newsmakers for interviews, to take their photographs or to film or record them.

It means we must be fair. Whenever we portray someone in a negative light, we must make a real effort to obtain a response from that person. When mistakes are made, they must be corrected – fully, quickly and ungrudgingly.

And ultimately, it means it is the responsibility of every one of us to ensure that these standards are upheld. Any time a question is raised about any aspect of our work, it should be taken seriously.

"I have no thought of saying The Associated Press is perfect. The frailties of human nature attach to it," wrote Melville Stone, the great general manager of the AP. But he went on to say that "the thing it is striving for is a truthful, unbiased report of the world's happenings ... ethical in the highest degree."

He wrote those words in 1914. They are true today.

The policies set forth in these pages are central to the AP's mission; any failure to abide by them is subject to review, and could result in disciplinary action, ranging from admonishment to dismissal, depending on the gravity of the infraction.

STANDARDS AND PRACTICES

ANONYMOUS SOURCES:

Transparency is critical to our credibility with the public and our subscribers. Whenever possible, we pursue information on the record. When a newsmaker insists on background or off-the-record ground rules, we must adhere to a strict set of guidelines, enforced by AP news managers.

Under AP's rules, material from anonymous sources may be used only if:

1. The material is information and not opinion or speculation, and is vital to the news report.
2. The information is not available except under the conditions of anonymity imposed by the source.
3. The source is reliable, and in a position to have accurate information.

Reporters who intend to use material from anonymous sources must get approval from their news manager before sending the story to the desk. The manager is responsible for vetting the material and making sure it meets AP guidelines. The manager must know the identity of the source, and is obligated, like the reporter, to keep the source's identity confidential. Only after they are assured that the source material has been vetted should editors allow it to be transmitted.

Reporters should proceed with interviews on the assumption they are on the record. If the source wants to set conditions, these should be negotiated at the start of the interview. At the end of the interview, the reporter should try once again to move some or all of the information back on the record.

Before agreeing to use anonymous source material, the reporter should ask how the source knows the information is accurate, ensuring that the source has direct knowledge. Reporters may not agree to a source's request that AP not pursue additional comment or information.

The AP routinely seeks and requires more than one source. Stories should be held while attempts are made to reach additional sources for confirmation or elaboration. In rare cases, one source will be sufficient – when material comes from an authoritative figure who provides information so detailed that there is no question of its accuracy.

We must explain in the story why the source requested anonymity. And, when it's relevant, we must describe the source's motive for disclosing the information. If the story hinges on documents, as opposed to interviews, the reporter must describe how the documents were obtained, at least to the extent possible.

The story also must provide attribution that establishes the source's credibility; simply quoting "a source" is not allowed. We should be as descriptive as possible: "according to top White House aides" or "a senior official in the British Foreign Office." The description of a source must never be altered without consulting the reporter.

We must not say that a person declined comment when he or she is already quoted anonymously. And we should not attribute information to anonymous sources when it is obvious or well known. We should just state the information as fact.

Stories that use anonymous sources must carry a reporter's byline. If a reporter other than the bylined staffer contributes anonymous material to a story, that reporter should be given credit as a contributor to the story.

And all complaints and questions about the authenticity or veracity of anonymous material – from inside or outside the AP – must be promptly brought to the news manager's attention.

Not everyone understands “off the record” or “on background” to mean the same things. Before any interview in which any degree of anonymity is expected, there should be a discussion in which the ground rules are set explicitly.

These are the AP's definitions:

On the record. The information can be used with no caveats, quoting the source by name.

Off the record. The information cannot be used for publication.

Background. The information can be published but only under conditions negotiated with the source. Generally, the sources do not want their names published but will agree to a description of their position. AP reporters should object vigorously when a source wants to brief a group of reporters on background and try to persuade the source to put the briefing on the record. These background briefings have become routine in many venues, especially with government officials.

Deep background. The information can be used but without attribution. The source does not want to be identified in any way, even on condition of anonymity.

In general, information obtained under any of these circumstances can be pursued with other sources to be placed on the record.

ANONYMOUS SOURCES IN MATERIAL FROM OTHER NEWS SOURCES:

Reports from other news organizations based on anonymous sources require the most careful scrutiny when we consider them for our report.

AP's basic rules for anonymous-source material apply to pickups as they do in our own reporting: The material must be factual and obtainable no other way. The story must be truly significant and newsworthy. Use of sourced material must be authorized by a manager. The story must be balanced, and comment must be sought.

Further, before picking up such a story we must make a bona fide effort to get it on the record, or, at a minimum, confirm it through our own sources. We shouldn't hesitate to hold the story if we have any doubts. If the source material is ultimately used, it must be attributed to the originating member and note their description of their sources.

AUDIO:

AP's audio actualities must always tell the truth. We do not alter or manipulate the content of a newsmaker actuality in any way. Voice reports by AP correspondents may be edited to remove pauses or stumbles.

The AP does permit the use of the subtle, standard audio processing methods of normalization of levels, general volume adjustments, equalization to make the sound clearer, noise reduction to reduce extraneous sounds such as telephone line noise, and fading in and out of the start and end of sound bites _ provided the use of these methods does not conceal, obscure, remove or otherwise alter the content, or any portion of the content, of the audio. When an employee has questions about the use of such methods or the AP's requirements and limitations on audio editing, he or she should contact the desk supervisor prior to the transmission of any audio.

BYLINES:

Bylines may be used only if the journalist was in the datelined location to gather the information reported. If a reporter in the field provides information to a staffer who writes the story, the reporter in the field gets the byline, unless the editor in charge determines that the byline should more properly go to the writer.

We give bylines to photographers, broadcast reporters and TV crew members who provide information without which there would be no story.

If multiple staffers report the story, the byline is the editor's judgment call. In general, the byline should go to the staffer who reported the key facts. Or, one staffer can take the byline for one cycle, and another for the following cycle.

A double byline or editor's note also can be used when more than one staffer makes a substantial contribution to the reporting or writing of a story. Credit lines recognize reporting contributions that are notable but don't call for a double byline.

If either of the staffers with a double byline was not in the datelined location, we should say who was where in a note at the story's end.

For roundups, the byline goes to the writer, with credit in an editor's note to the reporters who contributed substantial information.

Regarding credits for staffers who do voice or on-camera work: We do not use pseudonyms or "air names." Any exceptions – for instance, if a staffer has been known professionally by an air name for some time – must be approved by a manager.

CORRECTIONS/CORRECTIVES:

Staffers must notify supervisory editors as soon as possible of errors or potential errors, whether in their work or that of a colleague. Every effort should be made to contact the staffer and his or her supervisor before a correction is moved.

When we're wrong, we must say so as soon as possible. When we make a correction in the current cycle, we point out the error and its fix in the editor's note. A correction must always be labeled a correction in the editor's note. We do not use euphemisms such as "recasts," "fixes," "clarifies" or "changes" when correcting a factual error.

A corrective corrects a mistake from a previous cycle. The AP asks papers or broadcasters that used the erroneous information to use the corrective, too.

For corrections on live, online stories, we overwrite the previous version. We send separate corrective stories online as warranted.

For graphics, we clearly label a correction with a FIX logo or bug, and clearly identify the material that has been corrected.

For photos, we move a caption correction and retransmit the photo with a corrected caption, clearly labeled as a retransmission to correct an error.

For video, corrections in scripts and/or shotlists are sent to clients as an advisory and are labeled as such.

For live broadcasts, we correct errors in the same newscast if at all possible. If not, we make sure the corrected information is used in the next appropriate live segment. Audio correspondent reports that contain factual errors are eliminated and, when possible, replaced with corrected reports.

DATELINES:

A dateline tells the reader where we obtained the basic information for a story. In contrast, a byline tells the reader that a reporter was at the site of the dateline.

When a datelined story contains supplementary information obtained in another location – say, when an official in Washington comments on a disaster elsewhere – we should note it in the story.

The dateline for video or audio must be the location where the events depicted actually occurred. For voice work, the dateline must be the location from which the reporter is speaking. If a reporter covers a story in one location but does a live report from a filing point in another location, the dateline is the filing point.

FABRICATIONS:

Nothing in our news report – words, photos, graphics, sound or video – may be fabricated. We don't use pseudonyms, composite characters or fictional names, ages, places or dates. We don't stage or re-enact events for the camera or microphone, and we don't use sound effects or substitute video or audio from one event to another. We do not “cheat” sound by adding audio to embellish or fabricate an event. A senior editor must be consulted prior to the introduction of any neutral sound (ambient sound that does not affect the editorial meaning but corrects a technical fault).

We do not ask people to pose for photos unless we are making a portrait and then we clearly state that in the caption. We explain in the caption the circumstances under which photographs are made. If someone is asked to pose for photographs by third parties and that is reflected in AP-produced images, we say so in the caption. Such wording would be: “XXX poses for photos.”

GRAPHICS:

We use only authoritative sources. We do not project, surmise or estimate in a graphic. We create work only from what we know.

We post or move a locator map only when we can confirm the location ourselves.

We create charts at visually proper perspectives to give an accurate representation of data. The information must be clear and concise. We do not skew or alter data to fit a visual need.

We credit our sources on every graphic, including graphics for which AP journalists have created the data set or database.

IMAGES:

AP pictures must always tell the truth. We do not alter or manipulate the content of a photograph in any way.

The content of a photograph must not be altered in PhotoShop or by any other means. No element should be digitally added to or subtracted from any photograph. The faces or identities of individuals must not be obscured by PhotoShop or any other editing tool. Only retouching or the use of the cloning tool to eliminate dust and scratches are acceptable.

Minor adjustments in PhotoShop are acceptable. These include cropping, dodging and burning, conversion into grayscale, and normal toning and color adjustments that should be limited to those minimally necessary for clear and accurate reproduction (analogous to the burning and dodging often used in darkroom processing of images) and that restore the authentic nature of the photograph. Changes in density, contrast, color and saturation levels that substantially alter the original scene are not acceptable. Backgrounds should not be digitally blurred or eliminated by burning down or by aggressive toning.

When an employee has questions about the use of such methods or the AP's requirements and limitations on photo editing, he or she should contact a senior photo editor prior to the transmission of any image.

On those occasions when we transmit images that have been provided and altered by a source – the faces obscured, for example – the caption must clearly explain it. Transmitting such images must be approved by a senior photo editor.

For video, the AP permits the use of subtle, standard methods of improving technical quality, such as adjusting video and audio levels, color correcting due to white balance or other technical faults, and equalization of audio to make the sound clearer – provided the use of these methods does not conceal, obscure, remove or otherwise alter the content, or any portion of the content, of the image. The AP also allows digitally obscuring faces to protect a subject's identity under certain circumstances. Such video must not be distributed without approval of the Editor of the Day or senior manager. In addition, video for online use and for domestic broadcast stations can be fonted with titles and logos.

Graphics, including those for television, often involve combining various photographic elements, which necessarily means altering portions of each photograph. The background of a photograph, for example, may be removed to leave the headshot of the newsmaker. This may then be combined with a logo representing the person's company or industry, and the two elements may be layered over a neutral background.

Such compositions must not misrepresent the facts and must not result in an image that looks like a photograph – it must clearly be a graphic.

Similarly, when we alter photos to use as graphics online, we retain the integrity of the image, limiting the changes to cropping, masking and adding elements like logos. Videos for use online can be altered to add graphical information such as titles and logos, to tone the image and to improve audio quality. It is permissible to display photos online

using techniques such as 360-degree panoramas or dissolves as long as they do not alter the original images.

OBSCENITIES, PROFANITIES, VULGARITIES:

We do not use obscenities, racial epithets or other offensive slurs in stories unless they are part of direct quotations and there is a compelling reason for them.

If a story cannot be told without reference to them, we must first try to find a way to give the reader a sense of what was said without using the specific word or phrase. If a profanity, obscenity or vulgarity is used, the story must be flagged at the top, advising editors to note the contents.

A photo containing something that could be deemed offensive must carry an editor's note flagging it.

When a piece of video or audio contains something that might be deemed offensive, we flag it in the written description (rundown, billboard and/or script) so clients know what they are getting. Recognizing that standards differ around the world, we tailor our advisories and selection of video and audio according to customer needs.

We take great care not to refer readers to Web sites that are obscene, racist or otherwise offensive, and we must not directly link our stories to such sites.

In our online service, we link the least offensive image necessary to tell the story. For photo galleries and interactive presentations we alert readers to the nature of the material in the link and on the opening page of the gallery or interactive. If an obscene image is necessary to tell the story, we blur the portion of the image considered offensive after approval of the department manager, and flag the video.

PRIVACY:

We do not generally identify those who say they have been sexually assaulted or pre-teenage children who are accused of crimes or who are witnesses to them, except in unusual circumstances. Nor do we transmit photos or video that identify such persons. An exception would occur when an adult victim publicly identifies him/herself.

Senior editors/managers must be consulted about exceptions.

PROVIDING ATTRIBUTION:

We should give the full name of a source and as much information as needed to identify the source and explain why he or she is credible. Where appropriate, include a source's age; title; name of company, organization or government department; and hometown.

If we quote someone from a written document – a report, e-mail or news release -- we should say so. Information taken from the Internet must be vetted according to our standards of accuracy and attributed to the original source. File, library or archive photos, audio or videos must be identified as such.

For lengthy stories, attribution can be contained in an extended editor's note, usually at the end, detailing interviews, research and methodology. The goal is to provide a reader with enough information to have full confidence in the story's veracity.

QUOTATIONS:

The same care that is used to ensure that quotes are accurate should also be used to ensure that quotes are not taken out of context.

We do not alter quotations, even to correct grammatical errors or word usage. If a quotation is flawed because of grammar or lack of clarity, the writer must be able to paraphrase in a way that is completely true to the original quote. If a quote's meaning is too murky to be paraphrased accurately, it should not be used.

Ellipses should be used rarely.

When relevant, stories should provide information about the setting in which a quotation was obtained – for example, a press conference, phone interview or hallway conversation with the reporter. The source's affect and body language – perhaps a smile or deprecatory gesture – is sometimes as important as the quotation itself.

Use of regional dialects with nonstandard spellings should generally be limited to a writer's effort to convey a special tone or sense of place. In this case, as in any interview with a person not speaking his or her native language, it is especially important that their ideas be accurately conveyed. Always, we must be careful not to mock the people we quote.

Quotes from one language to another must be translated faithfully. If appropriate, we should note the language spoken.

The video or audio editing of quotations or soundbites must not alter the speaker's meaning. Internal editing of audio soundbites of newsmakers is not permitted. Shortened soundbites by cutaway or other video transition are permitted as long as the speaker's meaning is not altered or misconstrued. Sound edits on videotape are permitted under certain circumstances, such as a technical failure. They must be done only after approval by a senior editorial manager.

RESPONSES:

We must make significant efforts to reach anyone who may be portrayed in a negative way in our stories, and we must give them a reasonable amount of time to get back to us before we move the story. What is “reasonable” may depend on the urgency and competitiveness of the story. If we don't reach the parties involved, we must explain in the story what efforts were made to do so.

USE OF OTHERS' MATERIAL:

An AP staffer who reports and writes a story must use original content, language and phrasing. We do not plagiarize, meaning that we do not take the work of others and pass it off as our own.

But in some respects, AP staffers must deal with gray areas.

It is common for an AP staffer to include in his or her work passages from a previous AP story by another writer – generally background, or boilerplate. This is acceptable if the passages are short. Regardless, the reporter writing the story is responsible for the factual and contextual accuracy of the material.

Also, the AP often has the right to use material from its members and subscribers; we sometimes take the work of newspapers, broadcasters and other outlets, rewrite it and transmit it without credit.

There are rules, however. When the material is exclusive, controversial or sensitive, we always credit it. And we do not transmit the stories in their original form; we rewrite them, so that the approach, content, structure and length meet our requirements and reflect the broader audience we serve.

Similar rules apply when we use material from news releases. Under no circumstances can releases reach the wire in their original form; we can use information and quotes from releases, but we must check the material, augment it with information from other sources, and then write our own stories.

We apply the same judgment in picking up material from members or from news releases that we use when considering information we receive from other sources. We must satisfy ourselves, by our own reporting, that the material is credible. If it does not meet AP standards, we don't use it.

For video, if another broadcaster's material is required and distributed, the name of that broadcaster shall be advised on the accompanying shotlist.

Pickups of audio and of television graphics are credited in billboards/captions when the member requests it.

CONFLICTS OF INTEREST

The AP respects and encourages the rights of its employees to participate actively in civic, charitable, religious, public, social or residential organizations.

However, AP employees must avoid behavior or activities – political, social or financial – that create a conflict of interest or compromise our ability to report the news fairly and accurately, uninfluenced by any person or action. Nothing in this policy is intended to abridge any rights provided by the National Labor Relations Act.

Here is a sampler of AP practices on questions involving possible conflict of interest. It is not all-inclusive; if you are unsure whether an activity may constitute a conflict or the appearance of a conflict, consult your manager at the onset.

EXPRESSIONS OF OPINION:

Anyone who works for the AP must be mindful that opinions they express may damage the AP's reputation as an unbiased source of news. They must refrain from declaring their views on contentious public issues in any public forum, whether in Web logs, chat rooms, letters to the editor, petitions, bumper stickers or lapel buttons, and must not take part in demonstrations in support of causes or movements.

FAVORS:

Employees should not ask news sources or others they meet in a professional capacity to extend jobs or other benefits to anyone. They also should not offer jobs, internships or any benefits of being an AP employee to news sources.

FINANCIAL INTERESTS:

Associated Press employees who regularly write or edit business or financial news must always avoid any conflict of interest or the appearance of any conflict of interest in connection with the performance of these duties. For these reasons, these employees must abide by the following rules and guidelines when making personal investment and financial decisions.

These employees must not own stock, equities or have any personal financial investment or involvement with any company, enterprise or industry that they regularly cover for the AP. A technology writer, for example, must not own any technology equities; a retail industry writer must not own the stock of any department store or corporate enterprise that includes department stores. Staff members who are temporarily assigned to such coverage or editorial duties must immediately notify a manager of possible conflicts to determine whether the assignment is appropriate. If necessary, employees might be asked either to divest or to suspend any activity involving their holdings.

Editors and writers who regularly cover the financial markets may not own stock in any company. They may invest in equity index-related products and publicly available diversified mutual funds or commodity pools.

Financial news employees must also avoid investment activities that are speculative or driven by day-trading or short-term profit goals because such activities may create the impression that the employee is seeking to drive market factors or is acting upon information that is not available to the public. Instead, the personal financial activities and investments of these employees must be based upon the longer term and retirement savings. For these reasons, an employee covered by this policy should not buy and sell the same financial product within 60 days, unless he/she gains the permission of the department manager and is able to demonstrate financial need that is unrelated to information discussed or gained in the course of his/her employment. This trading limitation does not apply to equity-index funds, broadly diversified and publicly available mutual funds and commodity pools.

All employees must comply with federal and local laws concerning securities and financial transactions, including statutes, regulations and guidelines prohibiting actions based upon "inside information." All employees are reminded that they may not act upon, or inform any other person of, information gained in the course of AP employment, unless and until that information becomes known to the general public.

Employees should avoid any conflict of interest or the appearance of a conflict of interest in the investments and business interests of their spouses or other members of

their household with whom they share finances. They are expected to make every effort to assure that no spouse or other member of their household has investment or business interests that could pose such a conflict.

Employees should be aware that the investment activities and/or financial interests of their spouses or other individuals with whom they share financial interests may make it inappropriate for them to accept certain assignments. Employees must consult with their managers before accepting any such assignment.

Employees who are asked to divest holdings will be given one year from the date of the request to do so, in order to give them the opportunity to avoid market fluctuations.

When this document requires the sale of stock holdings, an employee can satisfy this requirement by putting the shares into a blind trust (or into an equivalent financial arrangement) that meets the same goal: preventing an individual from knowing, at any given time, the specific holdings in the account and blocking an individual from controlling the timing of transactions in such holdings. If AP assigns a staff member to a new job where mandatory divestiture would impose a financial hardship even after the one-year grace period, AP will reimburse the staff member up to a maximum of \$500 for the reasonable costs of setting up a blind trust.)

FREELANCE WORK:

Individuals who seek to engage in non-AP work are subject to the following restrictions:

- * Freelance work must not represent a conflict of interest for either the employee or the AP.

- * Such activities may not interfere with the employees' job responsibilities, including availability for newsgathering.

- * Such activities may not exploit the name of The Associated Press or the employee's position with the AP without permission of the AP.

- * Inevitably, some employees will use material they accumulated in their AP work – notes, stories (either written or broadcast), images, videotape, graphics – for other-than-AP uses. The resulting product must be presented to the AP for its approval prior to submission to any outside publisher, purchaser or broadcaster. And under no circumstances should the AP incur expenses for research material that is not used for AP purposes.

FREE TICKETS:

We do not accept free tickets to sports, entertainment or other events for anything other than coverage purposes. If we obtain tickets for a member or subscriber as a courtesy, they must be paid for, and the member should reimburse the AP.

GIFTS:

Employees should politely refuse and return gifts from sources, public relations agencies, corporations and others hoping to encourage or influence AP news coverage or business. They may accept trinkets (like caps or mugs) of nominal value, \$25 or less.

Books, tapes, recordings, CDs and other items received for review or provided as promotional material for an event may not be sold for personal gain. Items of more than nominal value, such as computer gear, must be returned. If appropriate, items can be donated to charities.

AP and its employees may accept discounts from companies only if those discounts are standard and offered to other customers.

We do not accept unsolicited contest awards from any organization that has a partisan or financial interest in our coverage; nor do we enter such contests.

OFFICIAL SCORERS:

Employees may not serve as official scorers at sports events.

OUTSIDE APPEARANCES:

Employees frequently appear on radio and TV news programs as panelists asking questions of newsmakers; such appearances are encouraged.

However, there is potential for conflict if staffers are asked to give their opinions on issues or personalities of the day. Advance discussion and clearance from a staffer's supervisor are required.

Employees must inform a news manager before accepting honoraria and/or reimbursement of expenses for giving speeches or participating in seminars at colleges and universities or at other educational events if such appearance makes use of AP's name or the employee represents himself or herself as an AP employee. No fees should be accepted from governmental bodies; trade, lobbying or special interest groups; businesses, or labor groups; or any group that would pose a conflict of interest. All appearances must receive prior approval from a staffer's supervisor.

POLITICAL ACTIVITIES:

Editorial employees are expected to be scrupulous in avoiding any political activity, whether they cover politics regularly or not. They may not run for political office

or accept political appointment; nor may they perform public relations work for politicians or their groups. Under no circumstances should they donate money to political organizations or political campaigns. They should use great discretion in joining or making contributions to other organizations that may take political stands.

Non-editorial employees must refrain from political activity unless they obtain approval from a manager.

When in doubt, staffers are encouraged to discuss any such concerns with their supervisors.

And a supervisor must be informed when a spouse -- or other members of an employee's household -- has any ongoing involvement in political causes, either professionally or personally.

TRIPS:

If a trip is organized, and we think the trip is newsworthy, we go and pay our way. If we have a chance to interview a newsmaker on a charter or private jet, we reimburse the news source for the reasonable rate of the costs incurred -- for example, standard airfare. There may be exceptional circumstances, such as a military trip, where it is difficult to make other travel arrangements or calculate the costs. Consult a manager for exceptions.